

**Thomas Jefferson to William Short, January 3, 1793 ,
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Leicester Ford.**

TO WILLIAM SHORT¹

1 Parts in *italic* are in cipher numbers in original.

Philadelphia Jan 3. 1793.

Dear Sir, —My last private letter to you was of Oct. 16. since which I have received your No. 103, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, & 114 and yesterday your private one of Sept 15, came to hand. The tone of your letters had for some time given me pain, on account of the extreme warmth with which they censured the proceedings of the Jacobins of France. I considered that sect as the same with the Republican patriots, & the Feuillants as the Monarchical patriots, well known in the early part of the revolution, & but little distant in their views, both having in object the establishment of a free constitution, & differing only on the question whether their chief Executive should be hereditary or not. The Jacobins (as since called) yielded to the Feuillants & tried the experiment of retaining their hereditary Executive. The experiment failed completely, and would have brought on the reestablishment of despotism had it been pursued. The Jacobins saw this, and that the expunging that officer was of absolute necessity. And the Nation was with them in opinion, for however they might have been formerly for the constitution framed by the first assembly, they were come over from their hope in it, and were now generally Jacobins. In the struggle which was necessary, many guilty persons fell without the forms of trial, and

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with them some innocent. These I deplore as much as any body, & shall deplore some of them to the

day of my death. But I deplore them as I should have done had they fallen in battle. It was necessary to use the arm of the people, a machine not quite so blind as balls and bombs, but blind to a certain degree. A few of their cordial friends met at their hands the fate of enemies. But time and truth will rescue & embalm their memories, while their posterity will be enjoying that very liberty for which they would never have hesitated to offer up their lives. The liberty of the whole earth was depending on the issue of the contest, and was ever such a prize won with so little innocent blood? My own affections have been deeply wounded by some of the martyrs to this cause, but rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated. Were there but an Adam & an Eve left in every country, & left free, it would be better than as it now is. I have expressed to you my sentiments, because they are really those of 99. in an hundred of our citizens. The universal feasts, and rejoicings which have lately been had on account of the successes of the French shewed the genuine effusions of their hearts. You have been wounded by the sufferings of your friends, and have by this circumstance been hurried into a temper of mind which would be extremely disrelished if known to your countrymen. The *reserve of the President of the United States* had never permitted me to discover the light in which he viewed it, and as I was more anxious that you should satisfy him than me, I had still avoided explanations with you on the subject. But your 113. induced him to break silence and to

notice the extreme acrimony of your expressions. He added that he had been informed the sentiments you expressed *in your conversations* were equally offensive to our allies, & that you should consider yourself as the representative of your country and that what you say might be imputed to your constituents. He desired me therefore to write to you on this subject. He added that he considered *France as the sheet anchor of this country and its friendship as a first object*. There are in the U. S. some characters of opposite principles; some of them are high in office, others possessing great wealth, and all of them hostile

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to France and fondly looking to England as the staff of their hope. These I named to you on a former occasion. Their prospects have certainly not brightened. Excepting them, this country is entirely republican, friends to the constitution, anxious to preserve it and to have it administered according to its own republican principles. The little party above mentioned have espoused it only as a stepping stone to monarchy, and have endeavored to approximate it to that in its administration in order to render its final transition more easy. The successes of republicanism in France have given the coup de grace to their prospects, and I hope to their projects.—I have developed to you faithfully the sentiments of your country, that you may govern yourself accordingly. I know your republicanism to be pure, and that it is no decay of that which has embittered you against its

votaries in France, but too great a sensibility at the partial evil [with] which its object has been accomplished there. I have written to you in the stile to which I have been always accustomed with you, and which perhaps it is time I should lay aside. But while old men are sensible enough of their own advance in years, they do not sufficiently recollect it in those whom they have seen young. In writing too the last private letter which will probably be written under present circumstances, in contemplating that your correspondence will shortly be turned over to I know not whom, but certainly to some one not in the habit of considering your interests with the same fostering anxieties I do, I have presented things without reserve, satisfied you will ascribe what I have said to its true motive, use it for your own best interest, and in that fulfil completely what I had in view.

With respect to the subject of your letter of Sep. 15. you will be sensible that many considerations would prevent my undertaking the reformation of a system with which I am so soon to take leave. It is but common decency to leave to my successor the moulding of his own business.—Not knowing how otherwise to convey this letter to you with certainty, I shall appeal to the friendship and honour of the Spanish commissioners here, to give it the protection of their cover, as a letter of private nature altogether. We have no remarkable event here lately, but the death of Dr. Lee; nor have I anything new to communicate to you

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of your friends or affairs. I am with unalterable affection & wishes for your prosperity, my dear Sir, your sincere friend and servant.

P. S. Jan. 15, Your Nos. 116. 117. and Private of Nov. 2. are received.—Congress have before them a statement of the 419. 274. 1149'. 426. 1729. It appears none were made from 42. 334. 362. 199. This long previous suspension and 406. 578. the day before the 620. 362. 115. 1467. 314. 167. 1278'. 319. 111. 1450. 796. 1490. 1042. 963. 307. 876.' him & leaves it 319. 1184. 758. 694. 1369. 1165. 527. 1480. 1340. had anything to do with it, and 394. 307. 876. 1300. 668. 758. 1412. 1165. 527. 1184. 1407.. 977. 341'. 712. 1185. 865. 168. 224. 314. 336. 1322. 1683. 485. 578. 1077. 551. 426. 689. 986. 1369. 426. 202. 224. 778. 1400. 216. And I will have it so used for your justification as to clear you with all and injure you with *none*.